

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOHN McCain
CHAIRMAN, SENATE COMMITTEE ON
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION
AVIATION SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING
ON FAA AUTHORIZATION AND THE NATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION REVIEW
COMMISSION
APRIL 30, 1998

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Ms. Garvey, this is the first FAA reauthorization that will bear your mark as Administrator. Until now, the FAA's failures and successes could be legitimately attributed to your predecessors. It is now your guidance and advocacy that are reflected in these legislative proposals, and the course they will set for the agency over the next several years. I look forward to discussing them with you today.

As you know, Ms. Garvey, I have stressed continually to you and Secretary Slater that we must work together to ensure that the FAA is successful. The FAA's success, and the safe, secure, and efficient operation of the nation's aviation system require the combined efforts of the Administration, the Congress, and the industry. I believe that you agree with that.

Unfortunately, the Administration's recent actions in this regard have been disappointing. The FAA did work with us in developing its reauthorization proposal. The Administration, however, did not consult with us on its recently announced aviation safety recommendations. Your press conference stressed the partnership between the FAA and industry, but said nothing about the Congress. In unveiling your legislative proposal based on the National Civil Aviation Review Commission's recommendations, there was no mention that Congress established the Commission, and appointed many of its members.

The American public expects us to work together, especially on aviation safety and security issues. While you have made some progress in repairing the FAA's negative public perception, and restoring confidence in the agency, there is still a long way to go. I can tell you with all candor that I receive each week letters expressing concern about the agency's ability to do its job. I know you know this Ms. Garvey, because I forward those letters to you. One recent letter, for example, said that the FAA's effort to modernize the air traffic system has been such an abysmal failure that the job should be handed over to NASA.

It is important that we communicate to the public, and even to some in Congress that we are working together. The more we can demonstrate, for example, the bipartisan nature of the Commission and its recommendations, the more likely it is that

we can accomplish the objectives the Commission set out. It is difficult enough that in moving forward with this proposal Congress will be hamstrung by internal jurisdictional issues.

Turning to the FAA's reauthorization proposal, I would note that Secretary Slater indicated in a recent meeting with me that whether or not the Administration proposed a PFC increase, the FAA would develop stricter criteria on the use of PFCs. Your proposal includes a PFC increase, but I did not see anything related to the Secretary's comment. As you know, I have concerns about using PFCs for projects that are not strictly related to airfield capacity improvements.

Again, thank you Ms. Garvey for joining us today. With the Commission's efforts, and the various studies and analyses that have been done over the last several years, we have a solid base from which to determine the direction we need to follow to avoid gridlock in our aviation system. As in past years, the FAA reauthorization will serve as an important vehicle for advancing a prioritized agenda for safety, security, and air traffic system modernization. I hope that we can count on the Administration to participate meaningfully in the ongoing development of this legislation.